



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

For Immediate Release: to PMS OF THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 1943.

Canned sea mussels, a product placed on the market for the first time this year by seafood packers of Maine and Massachusetts, have been received so well by the public that the industry is planning a much larger pack next season, it has been reported to Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes.

Although only 13 canneries - 12 in Maine and one in Massachusetts - packed mussels during the 1942-43 season, their output was 40,000 cases, representing well over a million pounds of food. With additional packers entering this new industry next season, and all plants anticipating a larger pack, a considerably greater supply of mussels should be available for the U.S. public next winter, Coordinator Ickes said.

Mussels are closely related to oysters and clams, and like them can be used in chowders, steamed, or fried. The meat is a golden or cream color and in flavor somewhat resembles the prized long-neck or soft clam of New England.

Although mussels have always been highly regarded in Europe, the United States has only recently begun to develop its resources of this shellfish, which grows in some abundance along the Atlantic coast from Maine to New Jersey.

Early in 1942 the Fish and Wildlife Service began investigating mussels as a new source of food. Tests were made of experimental mussel packs, and possibilities of development were discussed with officials of the Maine Department of Sea and Shore Fisheries and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, as well as with various cannerymen. Canning was begun by a few plants late in 1942, additional plants entering the industry during the spring of 1943.

The season for mussels extends from November through May, with the peak of the fishery falling in April and May when the mussel beds are free of ice. Last year the mussel crop was harvested largely by clam diggers, lobster fishermen, and others for whom the winter season is normally a slack one.

Most of the plants that packed mussels last season are engaged in canning herring during the summer and fall. Until the new mussel fishery developed, they operated at only about 10 percent of their capacity during the winter months.

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